

Foster Parents and Caregivers

Changing Lives One Child at a Time

January 2008



Welcome to the New Year!

Caregiver's Have the "Right" to be Heard!

Caregivers have the "right" to be heard and provide input (verbal or written) to the court regarding children in your care. Social workers must provide caregivers with written notice (certified mail) of the Court hearing at least 10 working days (14 calendar days) prior to regularly scheduled court hearings.

The "right to be heard" does not give the caregiver legal status as a party to the case and the court makes the final decision about whether and how the caregiver will provide input at the hearing. Please visit the foster parent website or ask your social worker for the Foster Parent Report to the Court Form.

Statewide Quarterly Consultation Group

The purpose of the quarterly statewide consultation group is to improve communication between foster parents and Children's Administration centered on recruitment and retention of foster homes and effective foster parent training. Please take the opportunity to be heard – your input is important!

The next Statewide Quarterly Consultation session is scheduled for:

January 14, 2008

1:00 to 4:00

Tacoma DCFS Office – Centennial I, Conference Room 195

1949 South State Street • Tacoma, WA 98405

The meeting is open to everyone. To call in please use the toll free number (800) 990-4701. Please contact Michael Luque', Foster Care & Kinship Care Program Manager if you have any questions about the regional or statewide meetings at (360) 902-7986 lumi300@dshs.wa.gov.

Do You Have an Emergency Preparedness Plan?

As a result of Hurricane Katrina and the recent natural disaster in Washington, having an Emergency Preparedness Plan is important for everyone!

As part of Children's Administration's (CA) federally required Emergency Preparedness Plan, CA needs emergency contact information for all licensed foster and relative caregivers in case there is a catastrophic event. This will help CA locate foster children, provide the necessary supports and make sure you receive your foster care reimbursement if a disaster disrupts communication.

Children's Administration is requesting in-state and out-of-state emergency contacts. Please use someone outside your local area as your in-state contact, since any catastrophe that affects your home will likely affect those in your vicinity.

The Emergency Preparedness form can be located on the foster parent website, foster parent listserv, contact your licenser and/or Robbie Downs, Foster Care Licensing Program Manager for any questions you may have. She can be reached at 360-902-8005 or doro300@dshs.wa.gov. for more information.

Beware – Cold and Flu Season is Here!

The cold and flu season is upon us again. The Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has determined that over-the-counter cold medicines do not work for children under age 6. Cough and cold medications do not cure or even relieve the symptoms of a cold for young children and can even be harmful if too much is given. The FDA recommends that we STOP using over-the-counter medications to treat cold and flu symptoms for children less than 6 years of age.

What is the "common cold"?

- A viral infection that kids and grownups pass around to each other through close contact
- It takes about 1-3 days to develop symptoms after exposure
- On average, kids get 6-10 colds a year!
- Antibiotics ARE NOT helpful in treating a cold!

What are the typical symptoms and how long do they last?

- Stuffy/runny nose, scratchy or sore throat – usually the first couple days
- Cough – often starts after the first few days and may last up to 2-3 weeks
- Low grade fever – usually for just the first day or so if at all

When should I take my child to the doctor?

- Child looks really sick, fever or not
- Child has cold symptoms for longer than 10-14 days or is getting sicker or has fever after the first few days.
- Fever over 103 with chills or sweating, or more than 3 days of fever
- Significant vomiting or stomach pain
- Trouble breathing – rapid, labored, wheezing or cannot talk in sentences
- Severe headache, persistent crying, irritability, lethargy, ear pain, eye drainage
- Caregiver is worried

What can we do...besides washing everyone's hands frequently?

To treat cold symptoms without using over the counter medications, pediatricians recommend:

- Most colds can be treated with fluids, rest, nurturing, and chicken soup (really)!
- Use saline (salt water) nose drops (these are over-the-counter) and a bulb syringe to dry up a runny nose - do not use medicated nose drops, even the over-the-counter ones.
- A cool mist humidifier in the child's room may help (make sure to clean the filter every day and leave bedroom doors open to prevent mold forming).
- Consult a physician if symptoms worsen OR child has a fever of 103 degrees OR has a fever for more than 3 days.
- For fever, sore throat, and headache pain use acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil). Check with your doctor for the right dose based on your child's weight. Do not give ASPIRIN to children! Older kids may use a throat lozenge such as Cepacol for a sore throat or cough.

Important Resources and Numbers

Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out of home care.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868.

On-Going and Crisis Supports for foster parents

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County, call 206-605-0664 and in any county from Snohomish County north, call 360-510-7601 or 360-863-6530.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.

Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE or www.parenttrust.org. The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington State. Last year, the Family Help Line received over 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect: **Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST)** 1-253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Mental Health Crisis Line Information: The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

General foster parent information for the state of Washington

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or www.fpaws.org. FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: **Foster Care Resource Network**, 1-253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

NEW – Resource Available Statewide

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Training for foster/relative caregivers

Check out: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

Children's Administration Foster Care Listserv

Check out: <http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1>

More postings coming soon on resources, news items, trainings.